

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 SSO-00 NSCE-00

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /080 W

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O 171724Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9345

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 2603

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CG, AO, BE

SUBJECT: BELGIAN ARMY GENERAL'S VIEWS ON ZAIRE MILITARY SITUATION

SUMMARY: BELGIAN ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF SAYS THAT NATURE OF THE SHABA INCURSION IS NOT YET CLEAR BUT COULD INVOLVE EFFORT TO CUT SHABA AREA OFF FROM REST OF ZAIRE. HE JUDGES ZAIRE ARMY NOW INEFFECTIVE BECAUSE OF "TOTAL VOID" IN NON-COMS AND JUNIOR OFFICER RANKS. HE WOULD FAVOR VIGOROUS STEP-UP IN EFFORT TO TRAIN ZAIRIAN ARMY. END SUMMARY.

1. LT. GEN. PIERRE ROMAN, CHIEF OF STAFF OF BELGIAN ARMY AND VETERAN OF THE CONGO, GAVE EMBASSY'S ODC CHIEF ON MARCH 16 HIS PERSONAL ASSESSMENT OF THE INCURSION INTO SHABA. ROMAN SAID THE CURRENT FIGHTING IN SOUTHERN ZAIRE MAY HAVE TWO POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS: (1) RETALIATORY OR SPOILING RAIDS BY FORCES IN SOUTHWESTERN ANGOLA IN RESPONSE TO ELEMENTS IN ZAIRE WHO HAVE RAIDED ACROSS THE BORDER PREVIOUSLY AGAINST THE CUBAN-BACKED ANGOLAN REGIME; HE CONSIDERS THIS THE MOST LIKELY POSSIBILITY AS THIS IS AN AREA OF COHESIVE TRIBAL GROUPS WITH EITHER ILL-DEFINED OR UNDEFINED BORDERS SEPARATING THE TWO COUNTRIES AND PARTIES OF THE SAME ETHNIC OR TRIBAL GROUP; (2) HOWEVER, HE IS CONCERNED THAT THESE RAIDS MAY BE A RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE PRIOR TO AN ATTEMPT TO CUTOFF THE RICH

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SOUTHERN AND SOUTHWESTERN PORTIONS OF ZAIRE FROM THE REST OF THE COUNTRY.

2. ROMAN ALSO COMMENTED ON THE CAPABILITIES OF THE ZAIRIAN ARMY, DRAWING UPON WHAT HE LEARNED DURING A RECENT VISIT TO ZAIRE. (HE HAD A TWO-HOUR MEETING WITH MOBUTU, A PERSONAL FRIEND.) ROMAN HAS A GOOD OPINION OF ZAIRIAN ARMY LEADERSHIP FROM THE RANK OF MAJOR AND

ABOVE. HE RESPECTS THE FIGHTING QUALITIES OF THE INDIVIDUAL SOLDIER. BUT HE DISCERNS A TOTAL VOID BETWEEN THE SOLDIER AND THE FIELD-GRADE OFFICERS. AS A CONSEQUENCE, HE SEES THE ZAIRIAN ARMY AS IN-EFFECTIVE.

3. GENERAL ROMAN SAID HE SAW AN IMMEDIATE NEED TO INCREASE THE EFFORT TO TRAIN THE ZAIRIAN ARMY, ESPECIALLY IN THE FIELDS OF MAINTENANCE AND MEDICINE. (HIS SON IS A PHYSICIAN PRESENTLY ENGAGED IN TRAINING ZAIRIAN MEDICAL PERSONNEL IN ZAIRE.) HE SAID HE THOUGHT THAT THE BELGIAN TRAINING CADRE SHOULD BE INCREASED, CONCEDED THAT THIS VIEW IS NOT POPULAR HERE FOR POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL REASONS. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THE FINANCIAL OBSTACLE COULD NOT BE OVERCOME WITHOUT OUTSIDE (READ: U.S.) HELP. NEVERTHELESS, GENERAL ROMAN SAID HE FELT THAT IT WAS PROFOUNDLY IN THE INTEREST OF BELGIUM AND THE PEOPLE OF ZAIRE TO STRENGTHEN THE MOBUTU REGIME AND INCREASE BELGIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE WELFARE AND SECURITY OF THE COUNTRY.

4. COMMENT: IN APPRAISING GENERAL ROMAN'S COMMENTS, THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE AWARE THAT: (1) THE UNIFORMED SERVICES HAVE MINIMAL INFLUENCE ON POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING IN BRUSSELS AND (2) THE BELGIAN AIR FORCE DOES NOT REPEAT NOT SHARE ROMAN'S WARM FEELINGS TOWARD MOBUTU AND THE ZAIRIAN MILITARY IN GENERAL AND WOULD CERTAINLY VIGOROUSLY RESIST SENDING BELGIAN AIR FORCE PERSONNEL BACK INTO THAT COUNTRY FOR ANY PURPOSE. RENNER

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## Message Attributes

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